

HIPAA for Midwives

Rebekah Teel

Midwives College of Utah - Student Midwife

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Delphine Silvermoon

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HIPAA is a law that was set in place to protect and secure each person's personal health information, specifically when dealing with electronic information used for billing health insurance. Some midwives may think that this law does not apply to them, especially if they do not currently bill insurance for their services. But, this law also covers information that might be used for billing for lab work or other testing. In these cases midwives would be required to abide by the requirements included in the HIPAA law.

Privacy is a topic that almost all midwives and students should be familiar with. We practice safeguarding other's privacy during our training and studies. When using cases for peer review or specific cases for learning purposes we are careful to protect the privacy of the people involved in the case study. We are also taught in the early days of student midwifery to not discuss individual clients and their personal details with others. We are entrusted to safeguard all of their personal identifying information.

There are some specific instances where a client's personal health information (PHI) might be disclosed with their written authorization. For example; to bill insurance, when attending a group prenatal appointment, for publicity, or for medical research. The only time an authorization is not necessary is for medical treatment purposes.

Part of privacy includes keeping health records and personal information in a secure place. These records should not be left laying out in the open for someone to walk by and see. The security section of the HIPAA law refers specifically to transmitting electronic PHI, usually for medical billing. Midwives should keep in mind that if they choose to use a secondary or outside provider for their billing services it is their responsibility to make sure that provider is HIPAA compliant.

As a student midwife I have a responsibility to follow HIPAA guidelines and protect my preceptor's client's PHI at all times. I can fulfill this duty by making a commitment to not discuss clients' personal or health information with others. I can help ensure that their information is

secure by closing computer screens and files when not in use and by not leaving papers with identifying information laying in plain sight. As a student I can be careful to remove all identifying information when using a client's situation or birth as a case study or example in my school work. I can also be HIPAA compliant by obtaining a written authorization from any client before using their information.

It is important as students, assistants, and future midwives that we become familiar with HIPAA and how it applies to us individually, within our practice, and our current and future clients.

## References

Maternity Neighborhood. (2017, January 10). *HIPAA For Midwifery 101: Part 1- The Basics*.

Maternity Neighborhood. <https://maternityneighborhood.com/2017/01/hipaa-1/>